

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON COUNTERING TERRORISM

**Milan Forum for Parliamentary Action in Preventing
Violent Extremism and Mass Atrocities**

*“Ensuring that counter-terrorism policies and
regulations respect human rights”*

Address by Member of OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism,
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Your Excellencies,
Honorable Colleagues,
Distinguished Participants,

I am very pleased to address this high-level Forum on behalf of the **Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**. I would like to start by thanking the all organizers, and in particular Parliamentarians for Global Action, for bringing us here today to discuss one of the most pressing challenges of the day – combating terrorism without compromising the respect for fundamental freedoms.

Terrorism has become an unprecedented threat to international and regional security, and we have to provide a strong response to this fear-spreading phenomenon. This panel specifically reminds us of the **need to treat each human being with respect and dignity**, regardless of his/her political affiliation, ethnicity or religion.

Today we should ask ourselves the following questions: can our counter-terrorism efforts and human rights obligations be mutually reinforcing? Should we sacrifice our long-standing commitments and values when it comes to the fight against terrorism? I am sure that all of us would give the same answers.

First and foremost, we must recognize that by developing counter-terrorism strategies based on the protection of human rights, we are also **tackling the root causes of terrorism and radicalization**, which often lay in hopelessness and despair. Therefore, adequately safeguarding all human rights – including political and civil rights, along with economic, social

and cultural rights – constitutes a key element of the comprehensive solution in addressing terrorism.

In 2004 the *United Nations High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change* reported that recruitment by international terrorist groups is aided by grievances nurtured by poverty, foreign occupation, and the absence of human rights and democracy. Indeed, there is a growing concern that marginalization caused by human rights abuses can induce radicalization and nourish violent extremisms. This is why we should strive to build upon our knowledge and experience and **develop forward-looking policies that promote inclusive, peaceful and respectful societies in our countries.**

As parliamentarians and representatives of our citizens, **we have a commitment to be at the very forefront of all counter-terrorism initiatives.** In order to meet this commitment, we are called to design innovative legislation and policies that strike a delicate balance between security and privacy, between effective counter-terrorism efforts and the respect for fundamental freedoms. In addition, we should provide oversight of the security sector and actively promote dialogue between national governments, local communities and civil society. Let me underline the key role that civil society plays in this context, as well as their important contribution in developing holistic and sustainable responses.

As a **forum of 323 members of parliament from 56 OSCE participating States spanning from Vladivostok to Vancouver,** our Parliamentary Assembly has always been a strong advocate for the adherence to democratic values and international law principles, including, of course, human rights. In line with the Organization's comprehensive security approach, the respect for fundamental freedoms and the rule of law is a cornerstone of our common security and prosperity aspirations.

Against this backdrop, the topic of this panel is of utmost importance.

We should always make sure that our security sectors act in accordance with our national laws and international obligations. In particular, **no human rights violations should be justified by counter-terrorism narratives.** This includes a wide range of rights, such as the freedom of speech, right to privacy, and, most importantly, the right to justice. The denial of justice to individuals and groups has direct repercussions on our societies and the cohesion within them, while unrestricted access to justice and fair trials are pillars of a functioning democratic system.

In the endeavor to boost our counter-terrorism ambitions, over the years our Assembly has adopted a number of resolutions pertaining to terrorism and radicalization, where its members unequivocally and repeatedly underscored the **need for all counter terrorism measures to comply with the principle of the rule of law and the obligations of international law,** including international human rights law, refugee law and humanitarian law.

For instance, we adopted a *Resolution on Strengthening the Role of the OSCE in Countering Terrorism* this year, two resolutions on *Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that*

Lead to Terrorism in 2012 and 2011, one on *Extraordinary Rendition Investigations* in 2012, another one on *Strengthening Effective Parliamentary Oversight of Security and Intelligence Agencies* in 2006, as well as one specifically on *Terrorism and Human Rights* in 2005.

In recognition of the challenges that lay ahead in this domain, the OSCE PA recently established the **Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism**, which I am proud to be a member of. It currently consists of 11 Parliamentarians from 11 different OSCE participating States and our main goal is to promote the harmonization and advancement of legislative and policy frameworks pertaining to terrorism and violent extremism. By participating in fora like this, we are striving to stimulate international co-operation, the exchange of best practices, as well as to assist in the consolidation of global counter-terrorism efforts.

We are currently at the stage of **defining our strategy and possible areas of contribution**, taking into account the specific roles that other actors already play in this field. During our recent **visit to Morocco** we heard about the remarkable efforts of local authorities in preventing violent extremism and radicalization, including by fostering inter-religious dialogue, social inclusion, economic development and respect for fundamental freedoms. Youth, in particular, play a key role in this regard. During the visit, we also learnt about the multiple challenges posed by the **foreign terrorist fighters phenomenon** as well as about the roadblock to achieving efficient information exchange. In our 2015 *Resolution on Comprehensive Legislative Reform on Foreign Terrorist Fighters*, we precisely encouraged OSCE participating States to design new and more effective information-sharing mechanisms and collaborate with other regional and international organizations and agencies.

Earlier this month we also **visited the OSCE Secretariat and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna**, where we had a fruitful exchange of views with relevant experts and civil society representatives. This allowed us to better determine our inter-parliamentary added value within the complex system of international and inter-governmental bodies. Among others, we met with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to discuss the importance of safeguarding the freedom of expression and the freedom of information while shaping our counter-terrorism approaches.

Among our plans for the future, we intend to **visit OSCE's Field Operations in Southeast Europe and Central Asia**, two areas in our region where the terrorist threat is particularly relevant. These visits would help us to get better acquainted with the tendencies and main concerns on the ground, which should then inform our future actions.

To conclude, let me once again thank the organizers for inviting our Committee to this timely event. We are eager to engage with you and join forces to promote more effective and human rights-compliant counter-terrorism strategies.

Our doors are wide open and I look forward to an interesting debate.

Thank you.